

## Sūrah Hāqqah

### Central Theme and Structural Coherence

A reflection on the contents of this *sūrah* shows that it has deep resemblance with Sūrah Wāqī'ah of the previous group. Thus for example:

- Both substantiate the Day of Judgement and portray the horrors of that Day.
- Both mention the details of the fate met by the companions of the right hand (*aṣḥāb al-yamīn*) and by the companions of the left hand (*aṣḥāb al-shimāl*).
- In both the *sūrahs*, the veracity and genuineness of the Qur'ān is sworn by.

This *sūrah* also deeply resembles Sūrah Qalam, the previous *sūrah*. Its central theme is the same as that of the previous *sūrah*: substantiation of the Day of Judgement. However, the nature of arguments is different in both. Just as the greatness and trueness of the Qur'ān is explained in the previous *sūrah* and people are warned of the consequences of rejecting the Qur'ān, similarly, in this *sūrah* this subject is discussed. The difference is that in the previous *sūrah*, it is discussed in the opening part while in this *sūrah*, in the concluding part. Both these styles are important as far as instruction and sounding a reminder are concerned.

### Analysis of the Discourse

#### Verses (1-12)

The history of various nations is cited as evidence to show that the worldly punishment of rejecting their respective messenger as well as the punishment of the Hereafter is certain to come.

#### Verses (13-18)

A portrayal of the horrors of the Day of Judgement.

#### Verses (19-37)

Details of the fate met by the companions of the right hand and by the companions of the left hand.

#### Verses (38-52)

A mention of the exaltedness and trueness of the Qur'ān; it is not the

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work of a poet or a soothsayer; on the contrary, it has been brought down by a noble messenger. People who deny its warnings must fully contemplate its consequences.

### Text and Translation

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الْحَاقَّةُ (١) مَا الْخَاقَّةُ (٢) وَمَا أُدْرَاكَ مَا الْحَاقَّةُ (٣) كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُودُ وَعَادٌ بِالْقَارِعَةِ (٤) فَأَمَّا ثَمُودُ فَأُهْلِكُوا بِالطَّاغِيَةِ (٥) وَأَمَّا عَادٌ فَأُهْلِكُوا بِرِيحٍ صَرْصَرٍ عَاتِيَةٍ (٦) سَخَّرَهَا عَلَيْهِمْ سَبْعَ لَيَالٍ وَتَمَازِيَةٍ أَيَّامٍ حُسُومًا فَتَرَى الْقَوْمَ فِيهَا صَرْعَى كَأَنَّهُمْ أُعْجَازُ نَخْلٍ خَاوِيَةٍ (٧) فَهَلْ تَرَى لَهُمْ مِنْ بَاقِيَةٍ (٨) وَجَاءَ فِرْعَوْنُ وَمَنْ قَبْلَهُ وَالْمُؤْتَفِكَاتُ بِالْخَاطِئَةِ (٩) فَعَصَا رَسُولُ رَبِّهِمْ فَأَخَذَهُمْ أَخَذَةً رَابِيَةً (١٠) إِنَّا لَمَّا طَغَى الْمَاءُ حَمَلْنَاكُمْ فِي الْجَارِيَةِ (١١) لِنَجْعَلَهَا لَكُمْ تَذْكِرَةً وَتَعِيَهَا أُذُنٌ وَاعِيَةٌ (١٢) فَإِذَا نُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ نَفْخَةٌ وَاحِدَةٌ (١٣) وَحُمِلَتِ الْأَرْضُ وَالْجِبَالُ فَدُكَّتَا دَكَّةً وَاحِدَةً (١٤) فَيَوْمَئِذٍ وَقَعَتِ الْوَاقِعَةُ (١٥) وَانْشَقَّتِ السَّمَاءُ فَهِيَ يَوْمَئِذٍ وَاهِيَةٌ (١٦) وَالْمَلَكُ عَلَى أَرْجَائِهَا وَيَحْمِلُ عَرْشَ رَبِّكَ فَوْقَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ ثَمَانِيَةٌ (١٧) يَوْمَئِذٍ تُعْرَضُونَ لَا تَخْفَى مِنْكُمْ خَافِيَةٌ (١٨) فَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ بِيَمِينِهِ فَيَقُولُ هَؤُلَاءِ أَفْرُؤُوا كِتَابِيهِ (١٩) إِنِّي ظَنَنْتُ أَنِّي مُلَاقٍ حِسَابِيهِ (٢٠) فَهُوَ فِي عِيشَةٍ رَاضِيَةٍ (٢١) فِي جَنَّةٍ عَالِيَةٍ (٢٢) قُطُوفُهَا دَانِيَةٌ (٢٣) كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا هَنِيئًا بِمَا أَسْلَفْتُمْ فِي الْأَيَّامِ الْخَالِيَةِ (٢٤) وَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ بِشِمَالِهِ فَيَقُولُ يَالَيْتَنِي لَمْ أُوتِ كِتَابِيهِ (٢٥) وَلَمْ أَدرِ مَا حِسَابِيهِ (٢٦) يَالَيْتَهَا كَانَتْ الْقَاضِيَةَ (٢٧) مَا أَغْنَى عَنِّي مَالِي (٢٨) هَلَكَ عَنِّي سُلْطَانِي (٢٩) خُدُوهُ فَعُلُّوهُ (٣٠) ثُمَّ الْجَحِيمَ صَلُّوهُ (٣١) ثُمَّ فِي سِلْسِلَةٍ ذَرْعُهَا سَبْعُونَ ذِرَاعًا فَاسْلُكُوهُ (٣٢) إِنَّهُ كَانَ لَا يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ الْعَظِيمِ (٣٣) وَلَا يَحْضُ عَلَى طَعَامِ الْمِسْكِينِ (٣٤) فَلَيْسَ لَهُ الْيَوْمَ هَاهُنَا حَمِيمٌ (٣٥) وَلَا طَعَامٌ إِلَّا مِنْ غِسْلِينٍ (٣٦) لَا يَأْكُلُهُ إِلَّا الْخَاطِئُونَ (٣٧) فَلَا أُفْسِمُ بِمَا تُبْصَرُونَ (٣٨) وَمَا لَا تُبْصَرُونَ (٣٩) إِنَّهُ لَقَوْلُ رَسُولٍ كَرِيمٍ (٤٠) وَمَا هُوَ بِقَوْلِ شَاعِرٍ قَلِيلًا مَا تُؤْمِنُونَ (٤١) وَلَا يَقُولُ كَآهِنٍ قَلِيلًا مَا تَدَّكَّرُونَ (٤٢) تَنْزِيلٌ مِنْ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٤٣) وَلَوْ تَقَوَّلَ عَلَيْنَا بَعْضُ الْأَقَاوِيلِ (٤٤) لَأَخَذْنَا مِنْهُ بِالْيَمِينِ (٤٥) ثُمَّ لَقَطَعْنَا مِنْهُ الْوَتِينَ (٤٦) فَمَا مِنْكُمْ مِنْ أَحَدٍ عَنْهُ حَاجِزِينَ (٤٧) وَإِنَّهُ لَتَذْكِرَةٌ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ

(٤٨) وَإِنَّا لَنَعْلَمُ أَنَّ مِنْكُمْ مُكَذِّبِينَ (٤٩) وَإِنَّهُ لَحَسْرَةٌ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ (٥٠) وَإِنَّهُ لَحَقُّ الْيَقِينِ (٥١) فَسَبِّحْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الْعَظِيمِ (٥٢)

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Ever-Merciful.

The Inevitable! What is the Inevitable? What do you know what the Inevitable is? (1-3)

The Thamūd and the ‘Ād denied the Pounding One. So the Thamūd were destroyed by a calamity that exceeded all bounds. As for the ‘Ād, they were destroyed by an uncontrollable storm. God let it loose on them for seven nights and eight days to ravage them. You would have seen them lying overthrown as though they were hollow trunks of palm-trees. So do you now see anyone remaining from them? (4-8)

And the same crime was committed by Pharaoh and those before him and by the overturned settlements also. They disobeyed the Messengers of their Lord. So He seized them in His firm grip. (9-10)

And when the water exceeded the limits, it is We Who carried you upon the ark to make this incident a reminder for you and that retaining ears may hear and retain it. (11-12)

So remember when the trumpet will be sounded once only and the earth and the mountains will be shattered to pieces with one crash; so on that day will happen which is to happen. And the sky will be rent asunder and frail will it be on that day. And the angels will be at its borders and eight of them will on that Day bear the throne of your Lord over them. On that Day will you be brought forth. Nothing of yours will remain a secret. (13-18)

Then he who is given his account in his right hand will say: “Read my account. I always thought that I shall have to face my reckoning.” Consequently, he will be in a life of bliss in a lofty garden whose fruits will be hanging low. Eat and drink to your heart’s content as reward for what you did in the days gone by. (19-24)

And he who is given his record in his left hand will say: “Would that I were not given my record or I were not aware of my account. Would that that very death were final. Of what use has been my wealth to me? I am robbed of all my authority.” – Seize him, then chain him by the neck. Then into Hell cast him. Then with a chain whose measure in yards is seventy bind him – For he used not to believe in God, the Most High, nor urged others to the feed poor. So, today he has no friend nor any food except the fluid in which wounds are washed. Only the sinners will eat it. (25-37)

So no! I swear by that which you see and also by that which you do not

that this Discourse has been brought by a noble messenger. And it is no poet's word. Little do you believe. Nor is it the word of some soothsayer. Little do you understand. It is a revelation from the Lord of the worlds. And if he had concocted some false discourses in Our name, We would have surely seized him by Our strong hand and then severed his life-vein. Then no one among you could have withheld Us from this. And surely this is a reminder for the God-fearing. And We very well know that there are those among you who deny it. And it will indeed become a regret for these disbelievers, and this surely is a certain reality. So glorify the name of your Lord, the Most High. (38-52)

### Explanation

الْحَاقَّةُ (١) مَا الْحَاقَّةُ (٢) وَمَا أَذْرَاكَ مَا الْحَاقَّةُ (٣)<sup>1</sup>

The word الْحَاقَّةُ refers to something which is bound to happen as per the dictates of common sense and morality; something which is inevitable and certain to materialize. This one word is actually a substitute for the whole sentence. Those who regard مَا الْحَاقَّةُ to be its *khavar* (enunciative / subject) have made an erroneous conclusion. The style adopted in these verses is adopted when it is meant to shake and jolt the addressee, especially an indifferent one. In such situations, a mention of the *mubtadā'* (inchoative / predicate) is enough. The *khavar* is not mentioned so that all the attention of the addressee is focused on the *mubtadā'*. Similarly, the ambiguity which as a result is found in the sentence also attracts the attention of the addressee.

الْحَاقَّةُ (the Inevitable) is from among the names of the Day of Judgement. This name not only expresses the certainty of its happening but why it should necessarily happen viz a viz common sense and morality. The arguments of both these aspects can also be seen in the exegesis of the previous *sūrahs*. Some indications can also be seen in this *sūrah*, and the subsequent *surāhs* also contain some of its very significant aspects.

Though this word primarily refers to the Day of Judgement, also included in it in a secondary manner is the punishment which a nation necessarily faces if it rejects its messenger. The reason for this is that this punishment is also a prelude to the punishment on the Day of Judgement and also its substantiation and in fact comes because of the rejection of this Day. The messengers of God have simultaneously warned their respective nations of two punishments: the punishment of the Day of Judgement and the punishment which is a necessary outcome of denying

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1. The Inevitable! What is the Inevitable? What do you know what the Inevitable is?

this Day. When the people of these messengers denied the Day of Judgement and regarded a messenger's standard of veracity to be the very punishment with which they were threatened if they denied this Day, then this punishment did come to them after the truth was conclusively communicated to them. Since every word and promise of God and every warning of the messenger is true, hence this punishment also is الْحَاقَّةُ ie. something which is bound to happen.

مَا الْحَاقَّةُ is a powerful expression of the horror and dreadfulness which is further explained by the subsequent words: وَمَا أَذْرَاكَ مَا الْحَاقَّةُ. In other words, the implied meaning is that who can know and who can tell what this inevitable incident is and when it comes what will happen to those who today are obdurately denying it.

In Sūrah Qāri'ah also, this style of address can be witnessed. I will *inshallāh* further explain it there.

كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُودُ وَعَادٌ بِالْقَارِعَةِ (٤)<sup>2</sup>

The inevitable incident about which people are warned of in the previous verse is substantiated by the history of the messengers and their respective nations: just as the Quraysh are refuting the punishment of denying the Hereafter and the punishment of the Hereafter itself, the Thamūd and the 'Ād too denied both and the result of this denial came before them. In this verse, the word *qāri'ah* is used to refer to both these punishments and it means "the pounding one". In the Qur'ān, it is mentioned that one feature of these punishments is that no one knows their time of arrival. Just as a sudden knock at the door jolts every sleeping person, a similar situation will arise when these punishments arrive.

فَأَمَّا ثَمُودُ فَاهْلِكُوا بِالطَّاغِيَةِ (٥)<sup>3</sup>

The word الطَّاغِيَةِ refers to something which exceeds its bounds. In verse eleven of this *sūrah*, the rain water in which the people of Noah (sws) were drowned is called: طَغَى الْمَاءُ. The Almighty punishes a people commensurate with their attitude. When a people exceed the limits in their attitude, the Almighty induces the very elements which are serving man to exceed limits and destroy them. The Thamūd too exceeded the limits and became rebellious as is evident from: (١١:٩١) كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُودُ بِطَغْوَاهَا (the Thamūd denied because of their rebellious attitude, (91:11)). The Almighty then destroyed them through a calamity.

2. The Thamūd and the 'Ād denied the Pounding One.

3. So the Thamūd were destroyed by a calamity that exceeded all bounds.

The *sūrah* does not describe this calamity. However, I have mentioned in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah Dhāriyāt the various indications made about it by the Qur’ān. It is evident from these indications that the Thamūd were destroyed by a thunderbolt which appeared from the striped winter clouds. Although there is nothing extra-ordinary about such bolts of lightning from winter clouds, however, the Almighty converts them into weapons of destruction whenever He wants to.

In these times, great advancements have been made by science and man apparently has successfully conquered many forces of nature. However, even today, we can see that whenever the Almighty wants, He brings to the fore the helplessness of all the scientists of the world.

وَأَمَّا عَادٌ فَأُهْلِكُوا بِرِيحٍ صَرْصَرٍ عَاتِيَةٍ<sup>4</sup> (٦)

The ‘Ād were routed by tempestuous winter winds. Just as the calamity with which the Thamūd were destroyed is called طَاغِيَةٍ, the calamity with which the ‘Ād were destroyed is called عَاتِيَةٍ which refers to an uncontrollable wind. The Almighty has put wind into the service of man, and it is necessary for his life and existence; however, when man becomes rebellious, He transforms this docile wind into an instrument of death and destruction.

سَخَّرَهَا عَلَيْهِمْ سَبْعَ لَيَالٍ وَثَمَانِيَةَ أَيَّامٍ حُسُومًا فَتَرَى الْقَوْمَ فِيهَا صَرْعَى كَأَنَّهُمْ أُعْجَازٌ نَقْلٍ  
خَاوِيَةٍ (٧)<sup>5</sup>

This is a portrayal of how winds serving man are transformed into pangs of punishment. The words حُسُوم and حَسَم mean “to ravage and destroy”.

The address “you would have seen” on such instances is general and does not refer to someone specific. The word الْقَوْم here refers to “opponents and adversaries”. It is as if the ‘Ād because of their rebelliousness became opponents of God, and thus the use of this word is very appropriate for them.

The implication of the verse is that the punishment of God knocked them to the ground as if they were hollow trunks of palm-trees which are blown away here and there by the wind.

The antecedent of the genitive pronoun in فِيهَا can be the wind as well as the land in which the ‘Ād lived. Both are possible and probable

4. As for the ‘Ād, they were destroyed by an uncontrollable storm.

5. God let it loose on them for seven nights and eight days to ravage them. You would have seen them lying overthrown as though they were hollow trunks of palm-trees.

according to linguistic principles of Arabic.

فَهَلْ تَرَى لَهُمْ مِنْ بَاقِيَةٍ (٨)<sup>6</sup>

This sentence is connected to the تَرَى of the previous verse. In other words, the fate of the settlements of the ‘Ād is brought before the imagination of the addressees and the question asked: Do they see a single person alive if they look far and wide around them? The implication is that when punishment descends on a people, it totally ravages them in such a manner. Foolish are the people who are demanding to see it for it is not something to be seen – it is something to be sought refuge from.

وَجَاءَ فِرْعَوْنُ وَمَنْ قَبْلَهُ وَالْمُؤْتَفِكَاتُ بِالْخَاطِئَةِ (٩)<sup>7</sup>

The word مُؤْتَفِكَةٌ means “overturned”. Here it refers to the places inhabited by the nation of Lot (sws). They were overturned by an earthquake, and a stone blowing wind (*ḥāṣib*) had covered them with sand and pebbles. Earlier two of the ancient nations of Arabia were mentioned. Now the Pharaoh and the settlements of the nation of Lot (sws) are referred to. The Quraysh were often able to see the remnants of these people. They too met a similar fate as the people of ‘Ād and the Thamūd since both had committed the same crime.

فَعَصَوْا رَسُولَ رَبِّهِمْ فَأَخَذَهُمْ أَخْذَةً رَابِيَةً (١٠)<sup>8</sup>

The words فَعَصَوْا رَسُولَ رَبِّهِمْ portray the severity of their crime. A messenger of God is an envoy of the king of the universe. If people disobey him, it is as if they rebel against the king of the universe. As a result, they become worthy of the punishment prescribed for rebels.

The words أَخَذَهُمْ رَابِيَةً refer to the punishment against which one has no defence and which becomes unbearable for a person. One type of God’s punishment is that which is only meant to warn and remind people. A person is soon set free from such a torment. However, when a nation dares to rebel against the Almighty, it is seized by Him in such a manner that it becomes intolerable for it.

6. So do you now see anyone remaining from them?

7. And the same crime was committed by Pharaoh and those before him and by the overturned settlements also.

8. They disobeyed the Messengers of their Lord. So He seized them in His firm grip.

إِنَّا لَمَّا طَغَى الْمَاءُ حَمَلْنَاكُمْ فِي الْجَارِيَةِ (١١)<sup>9</sup>

Here, at end of the list, an account of the people of Noah (sws) is also mentioned. Historically, they were the first among those nations mentioned to have faced the wrath of God. It is as if the whole history of the messengers of God is briefly referred to.

This incident is mentioned such that it expresses the favours and blessings of God before the addressees of the *sūrah*, which are the Quraysh. They are reminded that the people whose descendents they are were given refuge in the ark of Noah (sws) by the Almighty. They became worthy of this refuge because they had professed faith in Noah (sws) who was God's messenger. Had they not professed faith in him, they too would have been drowned like the rest of Noah's nation. In other words, if they are the progeny of Noah (sws), then they are also the indirect recipients of this favour of God; hence they must not forget history. If they do forget it and instead of obeying the messenger of God become disobedient to him, then there is no reason why the Almighty not deal with them in the very manner He dealt with the people of Noah (sws).

لِنَجْعَلَهَا لَكُمْ تَذْكِرَةً وَتَعِيَهَا أُذُنٌ وَاعِيَةٌ (١٢)<sup>10</sup>

The antecedent of the pronoun in لِنَجْعَلَهَا is not merely the ark; it is in fact the whole account of God's reward and punishment. Many examples of such antecedents can be seen in earlier *sūrahs*. The implication of the verse is that the Almighty has narrated this account of His reward and punishment before the survivors of Noah's deluge to make them remember it and learn a lesson from it and to transmit it to their later generations and not to forget it. Alas! They have forgotten it, and have risen against their messenger in the very manner Noah's nation had risen against theirs.

فَإِذَا نُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ نَفْخَةٌ وَاحِدَةٌ (١٣) وَحُمِلَتِ الْأَرْضُ وَالْجِبَالُ فَدُكَّتَا دَكَّةً وَاحِدَةً (١٤)  
فَيَوْمَئِذٍ وَقَعَتِ الْوَاقِعَةُ (١٥)<sup>11</sup>

After referring to various incidents in which divine punishment was

9. And when the water exceeded the limits, it is We Who carried you upon the ark.

10. To make this incident a reminder for you and that retaining ears may hear and retain it.

11. So remember when the trumpet will be sounded once only and the earth and the mountains will be shattered to pieces with one crash; so on that day will happen which is to happen.



meted out to a messenger's nation, here in this verse the advent of the Day of Judgement is portrayed. It is said that just as the Almighty does not need to make elaborate arrangements to punish such nations and whenever He wants it comes in the blink of any eye, similarly, He does not have to make any preparation to bring forth the Day of Judgement. Just one blow of the trumpet would be enough to signal this great upheaval to take place.

Man should not regard this earth and its mountains to cause any bother to the Almighty to bring forth this Day. He will simultaneously pick them up with the earth in one hand and the mountains in the other and with one collision He will shatter them to pieces. It was as if they were two glass cups which were crushed to bits. Here one should remember a notion of the disbelievers which the Qur'ān has cited at many places: when they would make fun of the Day of Judgement they would mockingly inquire if the Day of Judgement would also pound these mountains to pieces. Their implied meaning being that since this was out of the question, hence such a Day would never come.

The words *فَيَوْمَئِذٍ وَقَعَتِ الْوَاقِعَةُ* say that what these disbelievers are regarding as improbable will one day definitely manifest itself.

In the previous verses, the Day of Judgement has been called *الْحَاقَّةُ* (al-Hāqqah) and *الْقَارِعَةُ* (al-Qāri'ah). Here it is called *الْوَاقِعَةُ* (al-Wāqi'ah) which refers to the fact that if someone wants to consider it to be improbable it is his wish; to God it is something which is bound to happen.

<sup>12</sup> *وَانشَقَّتِ السَّمَاءُ فَهِيَ يَوْمَئِذٍ وَاهِيَةٌ* (١٦)

After describing the fate that would be met by the earth and its mountains, this verse describes what will happen to the sky. Today it might look rock solid and no one can see any flaw or fissure in it; however, on that Day it will be frail and brittle, and will fly like smoke and cotton pieces.

<sup>13</sup> *وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ عَلَىٰ أَرْجَائِهَا وَيَحْمِلُ عَرْشَ رَبِّكَ فَوْقَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ ثَمَانِيَةٌ* (١٧)

After alluding to the cleaving asunder of the sky, depicted in this verse is what will happen to the angels deputed on the sky. The upheaval will also strike fear in them. This actually is meant to be conveyed to the Idolaters who believed that angels would help them and intercede for them on the Day of Judgement. Such will be the horrific nature of this transformation

12. And the sky will be rent asunder and frail will it be on that day.

13. And the angels will be at its borders and eight of them will on that Day bear the throne of your Lord over them.

that all other angels will retire to one side and only those will remain who will hold aloft the throne of their Lord and they will be eight in number.

The happenings and incidents mentioned by the Qur'ān which will take place on the Day of Judgement are from among the *mutashābihāt*. It is to make us broadly comprehend them that they are described in words which we are familiar with. This is the only way to describe what will happen when the world unseen and unknown to man will come. It is not possible to know what will be their true form. Consequently, the Qur'ān has directed the believers to broadly profess faith in them in the very manner they have been mentioned, and they should not get after knowing their exact form lest they might end up in some trial.

14 يَوْمَئِذٍ تُعْرَضُونَ لَا تَخْفَى مِنْكُمْ خَافِيَةٌ (١٨)

Bringing forth here obviously refers to bringing forth before the Almighty. On that Day, the heavens and the earth shall be destroyed; so a person will not have any place to hide himself or any other thing.

15 فَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوْتِيَ كِتَابَهُ بِيَمِينِهِ فَيَقُولُ هَؤُلَاءِ مَا أُرْوُوا كِتَابِيهِ (١٩)

Mentioned in this verse are the details of the reward and punishment people will face once they are brought before the Almighty: The fate of believers is mentioned first. A believer will jump with joy when he sees his account and will ask others to read it.

The status of هَا is merely that of a sound similar to “ah” or “oh”; it is used when the speaker wants to say: “take hold of this”. Here the word هَا has come merely fill the gap between هَا and اُفْرُوْا. Examples of such superfluous words can be seen in previous *sūrahs*. The ة in كِتَابِيهِ is for *saktah* which has come in consideration of the rhyme of the previous verses. Examples of this usage can also be seen in previous *sūrahs* and some can be seen in subsequent ones.

16 إِنِّي ظَنَنْتُ أَنِّي مُلَاقٍ حِسَابِيهِ (٢٠)

Simultaneously, a believer will tell the reason for this great success: he always thought that one day he will have to give an account of his deeds. The implication being that this thought always shielded him from evil and as a result was able to obtain such a record of his deeds that he was

14. On that Day will you be brought forth. Nothing of yours will remain a secret.

15. Then he who is given his account in his right hand will say: Read my account.

16. I always thought that I shall have to face my reckoning.

able to gleefully present it to others.

The word ظَنُّ here means “a thought or belief that is likely to come true”. There exist potent signs and indications in the world around man and in that within him and in the teachings of the prophets and sages that man shall be rewarded or punished for his deeds. If a person is not absolutely dumb and indifferent, his heart bears witness that this world is not going to end just like this and that this accountability will definitely take place. Although he cannot believe in this premise the way one believes in something he observes with his eyes, yet he does think that this belief is very likely to come true. After such a belief, he is not ready to take the risk of being indifferent to it and disregard the consequences of the fate he will meet. The faith which as a result is imbibed in a person gradually strengthens because of various life experiences until it reaches the stage of certitude. If a person ignores this “likely belief” and waits that only when he is certain of the Day of Judgement that he will believe in it, then this waiting period will only end when he will see this Day from his very eyes and at that time professing faith will be of no use to him.

فَهُوَ فِي عِيشَةٍ رَاضِيَةٍ (٢١) فِي جَنَّةٍ عَالِيَةٍ (٢٢) قُطُوفُهَا دَانِيَةٌ (٢٣)<sup>17</sup>

Such people will live in great ecstasy and will have whatever they want.

The contrast between عَالِيَةٍ and دَانِيَةٍ should be kept in consideration: the orchards will be on high ground yet their fruits – which is what is really required from them – will be accessible. In other orchards grown by Arabs of those times, date-palms would be grown on the edges while in the centre there would be pomegranate-trees and grape wines. They had no difficulty in understanding عَالِيَةٍ and دَانِيَةٍ. The most prominent factor that contributes to the beauty of an orchard is its height and the fact that its fruits are hanging within human reach.

كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا هَنِيئًا بِمَا أَسْلَفْتُمْ فِي الْأَيَّامِ الْخَالِيَةِ (٢٤)<sup>18</sup>

These words will be said to them when they enter the orchards mentioned in the previous verse. Such eating and drinking will always be beneficial to them. The favours of this world can be harmful if a balance is not maintained in them or if one is not grateful enough for them; however, the favours of the next world afford no such danger. The linguistic research on the word هَنِيئًا has already been presented in Sūrah Tūr.

17. Consequently, he will be in a life of bliss in a lofty garden whose fruits will be hanging low –

18. Eat and drink to your heart's content as reward for what you did in the days gone by.

The words *بِمَا أَسْلَفْتُمْ فِي الْأَيَّامِ الْخَالِيَةِ* refer to the fact that the favours they have received in this world are a reward for their deeds done in the previous world. Here they are not required to do anything. They fully deserved these and this reward is everlasting. It may increase every moment but there is no fear of any reduction in it. The hard work that was needed to obtain it has already been done; now is the time to reap its benefits.

وَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ بِشِمَالِهِ فَيَقُولُ يَالَيْتَنِي لَمْ أُوتِ كِتَابِيهِ (٢٥) وَلَمْ أَذْرِ مَا حِسَابِيهِ (٢٦)  
يَالَيْتَهَا كَانَتْ الْقَاضِيَةَ (٢٧)<sup>19</sup>

The antecedent in the pronoun in *يَالَيْتَهَا* is “death”. In the presence of some indication, there is nothing linguistically wrong in bringing a pronoun. Examples of such usage can be seen in the previous *sūrahs*.

مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنِّي مَالِي (٢٨) هَلَكَ عَنِّي سُلْطَانِيهِ (٢٩)<sup>20</sup>

The letter *مَا* can connote both negation and interrogation. I would prefer its latter meaning because in this case it would express yearning and longing – something which is more appropriate here.

The preposition *عَنِّي* after *هَلَكَ* shows that the latter encompasses the meaning of *بَعْدَ* or *دَهَبَ*. The word *سُلْطَانٌ* means “authority”. They will longingly express the loss of the authority they had in the previous world – the authority which had made them so arrogant that they became indifferent to this day.

خُذُوهُ فَغُلُّوهُ (٣٠) ثُمَّ الْجَحِيمَ صَلُّوهُ (٣١) ثُمَّ فِي سِلْسِلَةٍ ذَرْعُهَا سَبْعُونَ ذِرَاعًا فَاسْلُكُوهُ (٣٢)<sup>21</sup>

It is evident from certain verses of the Qur’ān that those who amassed wealth by counting and hoarding it will be tied to columns through heavy chains so that they can taste the heat of the flames which come out of the treasures they greedily guarded. More details will be mentioned *inshallāh* in Sūrah Humazah.

19. And he who is given his record in his left hand will say: Would that I were not given my record or I were not aware of my account. Would that that very death were final.

20. Of what use has been my wealth to me? I am robbed of all my authority.

21. – Seize him then chain him by the neck. Then into Hell cast him. Then with a chain whose measure in yards is seventy bind him –

إِنَّهُ كَانَ لَا يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ الْعَظِيمِ (٣٣) وَلَا يَحْضُ عَلَى طَعَامِ الْمِسْكِينِ (٣٤)<sup>22</sup>

Mentioned in this verse is the crime which made him worthy of such wrath and punishment. His attitude of worshipping wealth in the previous world and his yearning that this wealth was of no use to him in this world shows that he had no belief in God. Had he believed in Him, he would have feared standing before Him one day and giving account of the wealth he had been blessed with and that such exalted is the Almighty that no one can free anyone from His grasp.

He neither spent on the poor himself nor urged others to undertake this virtue. The stingy not only don't spend in the way of God themselves they also want that others not spend so that the secret of their own stinginess is not disclosed.

In Sūrah Mā'ūn, the words used are: فَذَلِكَ الَّذِي يَدُعُّ الْيَتِيمَ وَلَا يَحْضُ عَلَى طَعَامِ الْمِسْكِينِ (١٠٣: ٢-٣) (he it is who drives away the orphan, and urges not the feeding of the poor, (103:2-3)).

However, in the verse under discussion, it is said that people who in spite of being wealthy drive away the orphan in fact do not believe in the Almighty even though they may vociferously make this claim. Similarly, in Sūrah Mā'ūn, the prayers of people who are miserly in everyday things of need are regarded as baseless: قَوْلٌ لِلْمُصَلِّينَ الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُونَ (١٠٣: ٤-٧) (so devastation be to these who pray, who are indifferent to the essence of their prayer; who put on a pretentious display in their prayers, and are stingy even in ordinary items of common use, (103:4-7)).

A little deliberation on both these places of the Qur'ān shows that the faith and prayers of those who in spite of having wealth do not help the orphans and the needy have no value even though they may lay claim to faith and also put up a pretentious display of praying.

فَلَيْسَ لَهُ الْيَوْمَ هَاهُنَا حَمِيمٌ (٣٥)<sup>23</sup>

Such a person will be punished in the Hereafter by being stripped of any friend. Who will sympathize with him on the Day of Judgement who did not recognize the rights of the Almighty and those of His creatures. It needs to be kept in consideration that those who are stingy in spite of being wealthy have no sympathizers in this world; so how can they have sympathizers in the world where reward and punishment is going to take place?

22. For he used not to believe in God, the Most High, nor urged others to feed the poor.

23. So, today he has no friend,

وَلَا طَعَامٌ إِلَّا مِنْ غِسْلِينِ (٣٦)<sup>24</sup>

Since such people had selfishly spent all their wealth on their own selves and in reaping the pleasures of this world and this greed made their wealth filthy by usurping the rights of the poor and the indigent, so on the Day of Judgement their food will be nothing but a fluid in which wounds are washed. It needs to be kept in mind that the wealth of a person is rendered pure if it is spent for the cause of God. If a person does not do so, then all his wealth is nothing but a pile of filth – the real form of which will manifest on the Day of Judgement in the form described in this verse.

لَا يَأْكُلُهُ إِلَّا الْخَاطِئُونَ (٣٧)<sup>25</sup>

This food will only be reserved for these sinners; others will not eat it. The reason probably is the one indicated earlier: since their sin was a specific one, their punishment will also be specific. The fact that the punishment will be similar to the sin committed is something which is also indicated in earlier *sūrahs*.

فَلَا أَقْسِمُ بِمَا تُبْصِرُونَ (٣٨) وَمَا لَا تُبْصِرُونَ (٣٩) إِنَّهُ لَقَوْلُ رَسُولٍ كَرِيمٍ (٤٠)<sup>26</sup>

I have already explained that the particle لَا which is mentioned before an oath is neither redundant nor is meant to negate the oath; it comes before an oath to refute the premise for which the oath has been sworn. It is like saying: "No! By God this is not the truth; in fact, the truth is ...". Similarly, here the commencement of the verse by this particle shows that a notion of the addressee is so baseless that the speaker wants to refute it immediately.

I have already explained the nature of such oaths mentioned in the Qur'ān: they are meant to bear testimony to a claim. Here the real claim which is in fact the central theme of the *sūrah* is to substantiate reward and punishment. The disbelievers would deny this claim and the methodology they would adopt to refute it was that instead of answering the arguments cited by the Qur'ān in its support from the world within man and that around him they would try to censure the Prophet (sws). They would allege that he is, God forbid, a poet or a soothsayer, and just as the jinn and the devils bring inspirations to poets and soothsayers, similarly, some jinn or soothsayer also brings inspirations to him. They

24. nor any food except the fluid in which wounds are washed.

25. Only the sinners will eat it.

26. So no! I swear by that which you see and also by that which you do not that this Discourse has been brought by a noble messenger.

would allege that it were such inspirations which the Prophet (sws) would present before people as revelations of God brought by an angel. Here, in this verse, this baseless allegation is refuted and for this the known world and the unknown world are sworn by.

The arguments which the Qur'ān has cited to corroborate the Hereafter and the reward and punishment which is going to take place in it can be seen in the previous *sūrahs* and in this one also. A little deliberation shows that among these arguments are signs in the world within man and that around him which can be seen, and also the attributes of God and the events of the Hereafter which though cannot be seen can be intellectually understood. In this particular *sūrah*, reward and punishment are substantiated first by the historical account of certain ancient nations and later through the events of the unknown world which the companions of the right hand and the companions of the left hand will face. Obviously, the first of these relates to testimonies found in history as well as in places where these people lived, and the second relates to the unknown world which though cannot be seen through the eyes but one's intellect acknowledges it. The reason for this is that the attributes of God and incidents of this world which reflect how deeds of people earn a congruous fate bear witness to this. The Qur'ān by presenting both these types of oaths as evidence has told the disbelievers that the reward and punishment which it is informing them of is bound to come. Both the known and the unknown worlds bear witness to this; they must not deny the Qur'ān by regarding it to be the creation of a poet or a soothsayer; it has not been inspired by a jinn or a devil; it has been brought down by a noble messenger.

The expression رَسُولٍ كَرِيمٍ (noble messenger) refers to Gabriel. The attribute "noble" is mentioned here to refute the claim cited above of these people. It is said that the person who has brought down this discourse is not a jinn or a devil as they allege. It is brought down by a noble messenger of God. In precisely this context, the words used in Sūrah Takwīr which support this opinion are:

إِنَّهُ لَقَوْلُ رَسُولٍ كَرِيمٍ ذِي قُوَّةٍ عِنْدَ ذِي الْعَرْشِ مَكِينٍ مُطَاعٍ ثَمَّ أَمِينٍ (٨١: ١٩-٢١)

This is the word brought by a noble messenger. He is endued with great power and held in honour before the Lord of the Throne. He is obeyed and is very trustworthy. (81:19-21)

In Sūrah Shu'arā' also, this allegation of the disbelievers has been refuted from every aspect. It can be looked up if further details are required.

وَمَا هُوَ بِقَوْلِ شَاعِرٍ قَلِيلًا مَّا تُؤْمِنُونَ (٤١) وَلَا بِقَوْلِ كَاهِنٍ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَذَكَّرُونَ (٤٢)<sup>27</sup>

These verses state in a negative way what has been stated above in a positive manner. If these people had embraced faith or valued this reminder, it would have automatically become evident to them that this cannot be the discourse of a poet or a soothsayer. The problem is that seldom does the desire to embrace faith and to listen carefully and intently arises in them. People who are devoid of this desire always look for such excuses to run away from the truth.

Why can't the Qur'ān be regarded as a discourse of a poet or a soothsayer? A detailed answer of this has been given in Sūrah Shu'arā', and I have explained all its aspects there. Readers are advised to look it up.

In قَلِيلًا مَّا تُؤْمِنُونَ and قَلِيلًا مَّا تَذَكَّرُونَ the verbs express intention, and it is very customary in Arabic for a verb to express intention. Examples can be seen in the previous *sūrahs*.

Mentioned in these verses is the real reason of their evasion: if they had the intention to embrace faith or the desire to benefit from the reminder, they would have easily distinguished the pebble from the pearl; unfortunately, this intention and desire seldom arises in them.

These verses also reflect their true inner-self. After all the leaders of the Quraysh were not so dumb and foolish as to distinguish between the words of God and the words of poets and soothsayers. They definitely understood this difference and at times the passion of acknowledging the truth would also have arisen in them; however, this passion was buried so deep by the burden of base desires that in the first place this passion would seldom arise and if ever it did, it was so weak that it would not be able to effect any change in their life. Only a very fortunate person could have been able to surmount these difficulties. It must be kept in mind here that it is the leaders of the Quraysh and not their masses which are referred to here. In the previous *sūrah* also, a graphic picture of their leadership has been drawn.

تَنْزِيلٌ مِّن رَّبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٤٣)<sup>28</sup>

This verse expresses positively what is stated negatively in the previous verses. I have already explained in an earlier *sūrah* the true meaning of تَنْزِيلٌ. It encompasses gradual progression and thorough arrangement in it. In particular, the thorough arrangement made by the Almighty to protect the Qur'ān from the incursions of the devils found among man and the jinn has been mentioned at many places in the

27. And it is no poet's word. Little do you believe. Nor is it the word of some soothsayer. Little do you understand.

28. It is a revelation from the Lord of the worlds.



Qur'ān, and I have explained it as well at these places. Inshallāh, a further elaboration of this issue will be found in Sūrah Jinn.

The words *مِنْ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ* (from the Lord of the worlds) point to the exaltedness of the Qur'ān as well as the evil consequences of its denial. The implication is that this discourse has been revealed by the king of the heavens and the earth and it will be a pity if they do not honour and value it. It is their own deprivation if they do so and will lead them to face severe consequences.

وَلَوْ تَقَوَّلَ عَلَيْنَا بَعْضُ الْأَقَاوِيلِ (٤٤) لَأَخَذْنَا مِنْهُ بِالْيَمِينِ (٤٥) ثُمَّ لَقَطَعْنَا مِنْهُ الْوَتِينَ (٤٦) فَمَا مِنْكُمْ مِنْ أَحَدٍ عَنْهُ حَاجِزِينَ (٤٧) <sup>29</sup>

This is the answer to an allegation of the disbelievers. They would allege that the Prophet (sws) himself has concocted the Qur'ān, and in a vehement manner has given them the wrong impression that it is from God. The verses say that it is God who makes a person His envoy and entrusts him with divine revelations, and therefore He very vigilantly protects and guards His envoys who cannot dare make any changes in them. Even if he attributes to God the slightest of falsities, God will grasp him by His own powerful arm and will sever his life-vein and there will be no one to save him.

This is said in such a style which not only reflects the strict vigilance of the Almighty over the Prophet (sws) because of his specific status but also is a response to a notion expressed by the disbelievers who used to say that if the Prophet (sws) wants them to accept this Qur'ān, then he should either bring some other Qur'ān or at least make some change in it which makes it acceptable to them. In Sūrah Yūnus, this demand and the response to it is mentioned thus:

وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ قَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ لِقَاءَنَا إِنِّي بِقُرْآنٍ غَيْرِ هَذَا أَوْ بَدَّلَهُ أَفُلَ مَا يَكُونُ لِي أَنْ أُبَدِّلَهُ مِنْ تَلْقَاءِ نَفْسِي إِنْ أَتَّبِعُ إِلَّا مَا يُوحَى إِلَيَّ إِنِّي أَخَافُ إِنْ عَصَيْتُ رَبِّي عَذَابٌ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ (١٥:١٠)

And when Our clear revelations are recited to them, those who entertain no hope of meeting Us say to you: “Give us a different Qur'ān, or change it.” Say: “It is not for me to change it of my own accord. I follow only what is revealed to me, for I fear, if I disobey

29. And if he had concocted some false discourses in Our name, We would have seized him by Our strong hand and then severed his life-vein. Then no one among you could have withheld Us from this.

my Lord, the punishment of a fateful day.” (10:15)

The expression *لَا أَخْذُنَا مِنْهُ بِالْيَمِينِ* has generally been translated as: “We would have seized him by his right hand.” This does not seem to be a correct translation. I have translated it as above as per the linguistic principles of Arabic. Ṭabarī’s translation is also the same.

The word *وَيَمِينٍ* means “life-vein”, “king-vein” or the “heart-vein”. The implication is that God is very near man and his life-vein is in His grasp; He can just squeeze this vein and kill him.

The Quraysh are addressed in *فَمَا مِنْكُمْ مِنْ أَحَدٍ عَنْهُ حَاجِزِينَ*. If they are demanding a change in the Qur’ān to their liking, then who will be able to save the Prophet (sws) from the grasp of the Almighty. Since the word *أَحَدٍ* here has come in its plural usage, hence it is absolutely in accordance with the principles of Arabic for *حَاجِزِينَ* to be in the plural form. An example of this usage of *أَحَدٍ* can be seen in the following verse: *لَسْتُنَّ كَأَحَدٍ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ* (٣٣: ٣٢).

It needs to be kept in consideration that the Almighty keeps strict vigil on people whom He chooses as His messengers. This is because He entrusts them with divine revelations which need to be protected. However, this does not necessarily mean that He will break the neck of everyone who ascribes falsities to Him. There are many people who even abuse the Almighty and are still given the respite of life, what to speak of ascribing falsities to Him. They will face the consequences of this crime in the Hereafter. However, a true messenger of God can neither ascribe falsities to God nor can alter His message under pressure from someone. It is because the messengers are entrusted with the *sharī‘ah* that they are rendered as infallible by God. A slight blemish on their part can create a wrong example for their followers and hence they are immediately corrected by the Almighty on even the slightest of blemishes. Other people are not protected by God in this manner because they are not entrusted with the responsibility with which the messengers are.

<sup>30</sup> *وَإِنَّهُ لَتَذَكِّرٌ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ* (٤٨)

The implication of this verse is that if some unfortunate and wretched people are not valuing the blessed Qur’ān, it is their own deprivation; the God-fearing benefit from its reminders and they are the sought after ones. The Almighty has revealed this favour specifically for them.

The verse also sounds an assurance to the Prophet (sws) that if these wretched people are not valuing the Qur’ān, he should not get depressed. After all, there are others who do value it.

30. And this is a reminder for the God-fearing.

وَأِنَّا لَنَعْلَمُ أَنَّ مِنْكُمْ مُكَذِّبِينَ (٤٩)<sup>31</sup>

This is a threat and warning to the disbelievers. The Almighty very well knows their identity. What is implied is that those who are denying should remember that they are not hidden from God and when this is so, then they will surely meet their fate.

وَأِنَّهُ لَحَسْرَةٌ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ (٥٠)<sup>32</sup>

Today these people are denying it, and are engrossed by this feat of theirs; however soon this will become a regret for them, and they will bemoan their misfortune. They will express remorse at their fate which was a result of this denial.

وَأِنَّهُ لَحَقُّ الْيَقِينِ (٥١)<sup>33</sup>

The reward and punishment which the Qur'ān is warning them of is not a baseless news. It is certain to come.

One can see that the *sūrah* ends on the note with which it began. It began by saying that the Day of Judgement is inevitable. Here, at the end, this motif is reminded of in a different manner. This style of similarity between the beginning and the end is adopted in many *sūrahs* of the Qur'ān and is a clear evidence of the coherence found in it.

فَسَبِّحْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الْعَظِيمِ (٥٢)<sup>34</sup>

This is an assurance sounded to the Prophet (sws) so that he should not despair because of their attitude and should patiently wait for the decision of His Lord and glorify Him. This glorification will inculcate strength, patience and confidence in him. The Almighty is powerful and exalted. When the time comes, He will show these rebellious people how each and every word of His materializes.

By the grace of God, I come to the end of this *sūrah's tafsīr*. وبيده (and the urge to do what is right is in His hands).

Rahmānābād,

14<sup>th</sup> August 1978 AD

8<sup>th</sup> Ramaḍān, 1398 AH

31. And We very well know that there are those among you who deny it.

32. And it will indeed become a regret for these disbelievers,

33. And this surely is a certain reality.

34. So glorify the name of your Lord, the Most High.